

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

weapons, and horses that were needed. But, in the night before the day upon which he was to be made a knight and receive the habit, Catherine herself appeared to him in a vision, rebuking him for still clinging to the vanities of the world, and bade him rise, seek out Neri di Landoccio, and go with him to the convent of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, where he would be received without any opposition : " Dost thou not remember how I told thee that, when thou shouldst think I was furthest from thee, I should then be most near thee, and that I should lay such a yoke upon thy neck that thou wilt never be able to shake it off?" Francesco was at once seized with such a desire to take the Olivetan habit, that it seemed the night would never end. He rose at dawn, and hastened to find Neri in his hermitage, who likewise had seen Catherine in the night and been prepared for his coming. They went together to Monte Oliveto, where, the abbot-general being absent, the prior agreed to receive Francesco into the order. He returned to Siena, sold his armour, weapons, horses, and distributed the proceeds to the poor, and then, going back to the convent, received the habit on the same evening, the vigil of St. Lucy.¹ This was in 1388. But Francesco's instability pursued him even into the cloister. After filling various offices, sometimes that of master of novices, but more frequently cellarer, at different convents of the order, he left the Olivetani in 1410, and became a black monk of St. Benedict. We find him, in 1413, a Benedictine in the abbey of San Miliano near Sassoferrato, sending his recollections of Catherine to Fra Tommaso Caffarini, as his *Contestatio* to form part of the Venetian Process ; " concerning those wondrous things," he says in the accompanying letter, " which I saw the Lord work in His creatures by means of the glorious and holy virgin, Catherine of Siena, our most sweet mother, what time I bore her company in the city of Siena and without. And albeit I do not narrate a hundredth part of what I saw, I nevertheless ratify and confirm all that is said in the Legend of the Virgin by Master Raimondo

¹ *Contestatio Francisci de Malavocis*, cap. i., MS. *cit.*, pp. 433-436.